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Towards the Establishment of a Pan-African University: A Strategic Concept Paper

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Abstract

For a long time, Pan-Africanists have advocated the establishment of a Pan-African University. In spite of various efforts in this direction, the hope has failed to materialise. The challenge is that such a university must be a new university, not only in the approach to teaching and research, but more fundamentally, in its strategic conception and its placement at the base of African and human emancipation and liberation. The establishment of the Pan-African University should have as its overall goal the provision of opportunities for higher and advanced education for students and adult learners in the context of a new African-based epistemology and methodology. The models of Western Universities which Africa adopted have proved completely unsuitable for Africa's needs.

But for the Pan-African University to set a new path in the search for knowledge and truth, it must first and foremost be built on a sound spiritual basis that highlights those aspects of African spiritual life that has enabled the African people to survive as a human community throughout the centuries. It is time that such a task be embarked on headlong.

Introduction

Pan-Africanists and people of goodwill towards Africa's advancement for a long time have advocated the establishment of a Pan-African University, and yet this hope has never been realised despite various attempts having been made in this direction. The challenge is that such a university must be a *new university*, not only in the approach to teaching and research, but more fundamentally, in its strategic conception and its placement at the base of African and human emancipation and liberation. In being a new university, it has to play the vital role of freeing knowledge production from narrow class, technical, and instrumentalist dominance by a few specialists to a broader theatre of recognition of other producers of knowledge, which mat-

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ters in their lives and has validity in their cultural contexts. This is what has made the creation of such a university more difficult because its creation would not only undermine existing dominant interests, but also challenge the citadel of Eurocentric paradigms and western 'scientific' epistemologies of knowledge.

Yet it is time that such a task be embarked on headlong. As Chancellor Williams cautioned us in his last book: *The Rebirth of African Civilisation* [1963], the task of establishing an African University "even when pushed on all fronts, as it must be, with the speed consistent with careful study and soundness, will nevertheless be like building a cathedral—which one expects to see completed in his lifetime or that of his children" [p.212]. Williams called for a Master Plan with a clear goal but with which we will begin to build, no matter in what small way, but begin to build concentrating on those tasks which can be done but which become the foundation for the rest [ibid]. In somewhat similar vein in advising on the embarking on this task, Professor Kwesi Kaa Prah, advised that it is better to take small steps but which, when put together, lead to success. In whatever case, he added, we must ensure that "we do not fail".¹

It is for this reason that Afrika Study Centre Trust-ASCT based in Mbale, Uganda, wishes to be associated with those institutions, organisations, and individuals both on the African continent and the African Diaspora that wish to see the fulfilment of this dream in the furtherance of African emancipation and liberation. Afrika Study Centre was established and registered in Uganda on 2 December 1994 as a Trust under the Trustees Incorporation Act, (Cap 147). Under the Act, ASCT has the status of *universitas personarum* with a perpetual succession unaffected by changes in members of its trustees, which is capable of owning property and incurring liabilities in its own name of suing and being sued in court of law. Therefore, the ASCT has, in relation to its property and affairs, and for the purposes of carrying out its objects or performing any acts incidental thereto, all rights, powers, and privileges which it would have possessed had it been a private individual of full legal capacity, except as limited by law.

At the first meeting of the Board of Trustees, held shortly after its registration, it was noted by the promoters of the project that the Trust was the collective outcome of the thoughts and efforts of a small group of Ugandans of varied intellectual and professional backgrounds who were united by a common desire to contribute constructively to the emancipation of Africa through study and research. The Trustees had also noted that this was part of a multifaceted struggle of the African peoples, both on the African continent and in the African Diaspora, who were ceaselessly engaged in the human endeavour of uplifting themselves from centuries of degradation, exploitation and domination by others who had enslaved and colonised

them. Without improving their knowledge of the world around them and their memory of their world of the past, they could not foster their authentic and wholesome development amidst great historical and contemporary odds.

Among the broad goals of the Trust, the following were central to its general vision: sponsoring, promoting, undertaking, establishing and conducting research into recognised subjects and academic study, including African history, African culture, African society, African links with other peoples on other continents now and in the past, problems of transition of African societies and the role of African tradition and institutions in the world, as well as the dissemination for public benefit the useful results of such research by publishing the same for worldwide distribution and consumption to include educational establishments throughout Uganda, Africa and the World. In addition, the ASC Trust was to establish, set up, promote, organise, and maintain or assist in so doing seminars, conferences, public and private meetings, displays, libraries, study centres, resource centres, and the like—all intended to advance African research and learning.

Since then Afrika Study Centre has, from its small semi-rural enclave in Mbale, eastern Uganda, embarked on a number of research, training and collaborative activities that have helped inspire the Trust to pursue the vision of the establishment of a Pan-African University in collaboration with other institutions and organisations. These have included:

- Making contacts with individuals, organisations and institutions standing for the same ideas as the Trust in order to maintain the image of the Trust;
- Carrying out some limited research for the production of academic papers as well as the writing of monographs and books on current issues of African culture and development. One such major book is the manuscript now with the publishers entitled: *Africa In the New Millennium: Towards a Post-Traditional Renaissance*, which was submitted to Africa World Press in 2000, but which is coming out in 2003. Another, which has come out of the political activity connected with the African Renaissance and the transformation of the OAU into the African Union (including the emergence of continental economic programmes such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development-NEPAD,) entitled: *The African Renaissance and Pan-Africanism*, is due to be published also by Africa World Press in 2003.
- Collaborating with other institutions in Uganda, other parts of Africa and the world at large. This included collaboration with the Islamic University in Uganda aimed at staff development as well as co-hosting of Swedish students from Osterlenes Folk High School to double with African students in small-scale research in communities and institutions that encourages cross-cultural learning and understanding. We hope that this programme can lead

to the creation of department of African-Skandinavian Studies within the Pan-African University.

- Three-year research programme on violence and conflict in agro-pastoral communities supported by Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation of New York. This research has resulted in the production of five monographs on sub-themes on the subject and a book manuscript entitled: *Globalisation, Arms Proliferation and Transformation in Agro-pastoral Communities in Eastern Africa*. As a result of this research, ASCT developed a "Field Building" research activity on security in agro-pastoral communities.
- Collaboration with the Social Science Research Council of New York, supported by the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation in "Field Building" research activity aimed at bringing together academic scholars, practitioners, and indigenous knowledge experts and custodians. This activity was intended to result in the pooling of skills and expertise from these sources of knowledge so that such pool of knowledge can be made accessible to all users. This activity has led to the questioning of the dominant Eurocentric epistemologies which had eclipsed endogenous knowledge systems but which are now being recognised. To complete this challenge, we have to elaborate further the epistemology and methodology that can inform knowledge production in Africa as part of the process of creating a truly global knowledge in which African sources are fully recognised [Nabudere, 2002].
- The promotion of the idea of establishing a Pan-African University. Currently the ASC Trust is developing a collaboration arrangement with the University of South Africa-UNISA and other like-minded institutions of higher learning aimed at creating an African-centred higher education (including materials, books, curriculum development, etc.) consistent with the need for the African renaissance and African rebirth.

The Pan-African University

The establishment of the Pan-African University should have as its overall goal the provision of opportunities for higher and advanced education for students and adult learners in the context of a new African-based epistemology and methodology. It should enable them the opportunity to acquire and produce new knowledge in the context of the African condition and the global environment in which we exist. It should provide innovative ways of researching, learning, and sharing of knowledge in, and with, the communities in which the researchers and learners are engaged in acquiring such knowledge in Africa and elsewhere in the world. It is, more importantly, a response to the cry of the African people for an African Renaissance and rebirth that can reawaken and reactivate their genius and create an atmosphere for self-transformation and development to recover what has been lost and forgotten.

But for the Pan-African University to set a new path in the search for knowledge and truth, it must first and foremost be built on a sound spiritual basis that highlights those aspects of African spiritual life that has enabled the African people to survive as a human community throughout the centuries. It should, as Chancellor Williams, reminds us, go beyond European classical humanism with its class, socio-economic and geographical limitations based on Greece and the Athenian City-State, which was based on a system of slavery. Pan-African humanism must lead to "enlarged humanities" and recapture that original meaning of humanity which Western scholars, beginning with Plato, in their hollow and lopsided search for material progress, abandoned. By privileging "reason" above everything else and abandoning the spiritual aspects of life, including the idea of the immortal soul, western scholarship embarked on a path that is increasingly bringing humanity to the brink of destruction through violence and ecological destruction].

The task of contemporary African philosophy is to critique the Eurocentric "Idea" and "general philosophy" in its metaphysical belief that European humanism is superior to that of the African people. This falsehood, which Europe perpetuated and still does, in so many ways, is based on the idea that the rest of humanity has to be *forced* to believe like Europe in order to be "humanised" into a singular humanity. This, in the words of Tsenay Serequeberhan, implies the "singularisation of human diversity by being forced onto a singular track of historical 'progress' grounded on an emulation and/or mimicry of European historicity" (Serequeberhan, 2002:67). According to Serequeberhan, this "pretext" that flattens all difference, has to be critically "de-structured" by contemporary African philosophy if "our shared humanity" that Kant talks about is to be realised and critically appropriated. Indeed for him, the task of contemporary African philosophy—its critical-negative project—is the critique of Eurocentrism and recognition and de-structuring of its speculative metaphysical underpinnings, which still holds us in bondage" (ibid: 75).

The African Renaissance, which should inform the establishment of the Pan-African University, must therefore recapture those basic elements of African humanism (*Ubuntu, sommun bonus, eternal life and immanent moral justice*) as the opening of the way to a new humanistic universalism. This, according to Williams, "is the spiritual and moral element, actualised in goodwill among men (and women), which Africa itself has preserved and can give to the world" (ibid: 208, 213).

This task has not been achieved by the existing African Universities, which have failed to generate the kind of knowledge environment required for the social and economic transformation of their societies. They have continued to reproduce dependent Eurocentric knowledge, a knowledge that is dependent on its actualisation in centres that exploit the African people and utilise African

resources freely. They have failed to transform themselves in centres of learning so as to strengthen African independence and development. They have become satellite universities of other universities outside the African continent serving outside interests and agendas instead of serving the African people.

The models of Western Universities, which Africa adopted, have proved completely unsuitable for Africa's needs. According to Dr Alex A. Kwampong, the former vice-chancellor of the University of Ghana, the post-colonial African universities came into being at the same time as the birth of new African states or soon after the attainment of their independence. They were consciously conceived and designed by the new African leadership with their former colonial advisers as "prime instruments" for the attainment of national independence, as well as the consolidation of that independence. But this independence has continued to reflect European dominance by Western educated African elites, which continue to peddle Eurocentric "development" models.

Thus in addition to serving the universal and basic objectives of universities everywhere, these universities were expected, above all, to promote the development and modernisation of their various countries along western lines in the process of "nation-building." According to Kwampong, they were meant to be "development universities," expected to play much the same role as the land-grant colleges of the United States in the nineteenth century. But forty years on, the African University and the African governments that created them had dismally failed to chart new paths for Africa's emancipation and liberation and Africa finds itself in deep, multidimensional crises that require deeply thought out solutions and responses, if the African rebirth is ever to be achieved (Vilakazi, 1999: 205-6).

But in embarking on this great task, we have to realise that we are not beginning from nothing. The university as an institution of learning and knowledge reproduction has its origin in Africa. The Sankore University founded in the City of Timbuktu in the Songhay Empire was the latest and best of its kind anywhere in the world. The University was the intellectual capital of the Western Sudan and provided a vibrant learning environment for the learners and the teachers. Felix DuBois in his book: *Timbuctoo the Mysterious* described the scholars at this University in the following words:

They astounded the most learned men of Islam by their erudition. That these Negroes were at a level with the Arab savants (men of exceptional learning) is proved by the fact that they were installed as professors in Morocco and Egypt. In contrast to this, we find that the Arabs were not always equal to the requirements of Sankore (Quoted by Mzamane, 1999: 179).

Thus before colonisation and the Arab and European enslavement of Africans, Africa provided the best institutions of learning that there was at the time. It is

recorded that when the Moroccans invaded Timbuktu in 1552, Professor Ahmad Baba, the last Chancellor of the University was the author of some 40 books on different subjects. He had a collection of some 1,600 books in his library. He was exiled and this treasure was destroyed in the hands of the Arab invaders [Ibid: 180]. The basis of African civilisation was weakened and efforts were made to destroy it. But although weakened it did not die nor was it destroyed.

The physical structures were destroyed but not the soul of the Africans who believed in *eternal life* and *immanent moral justice* of humanity. It is this soul of humanity that survived and that seeks to rebuild what was lost of the institutions Africans created in the past, but which have relevance in their lives of today's world. Thus, the establishment of the Pan-African University does not begin from a vacuum but has a deep heritage of culture and civilisational values that must inform its recreation. These institutions are to be found within Africa's ancient achievements. They have to be unearthed and reclaimed.

Indeed, as George James points out in his *Stolen Legacy: Greek Philosophy is Stolen Egyptian Philosophy*, much of the one thousand books credited to Aristotle were not his products. Most of them were copied from Egyptian texts, which Alexander the Great had looted from the libraries of Egypt during Greek conquest and occupation of that African civilisation. From his research, James was able to observe that:

Certainly he could not have obtained them from the Greeks, for that vast body of knowledge, which bears his name and which was presented as new, would really have been the traditional common possession of all who were members of the Greek Schools of philosophy for they would have been the only persons inside Greece permitted to win such books; for knowledge was protected as secret. Under these circumstances it is evident that the vast body of scientific knowledge ascribed to Aristotle, was neither in possession of the Greeks of his time, nor was there any one in Greece competent to teach him Science and, least of all, on so vast a scale (James, 1992: 129).

James concluded that the Greeks, among the surrounding nations, were the most anxious to obtain the valuable secrets of the Egyptians, in the Ancient Sciences, and this opportunity came when Alexander the Great invaded Egypt. According to Strabo and Plutarch, who James quotes, Alexander entrusted these books in the hands of Aristotle, and upon Aristotle's death, the looted books fell in the hands of Theophrastus who succeeded him as head of his School. Later the Roman Army looted these books in style when Greece fell to them in 84 BC. They were carried by Sulla to Rome, where Tyrannio, a grammarian secured copies and enabled Andronicus of Rhodes to publish them.

Cheikh Anta Diop has pointed out that until Africa is able to reclaim this historical and Promethean consciousness that is embodied in the achieve-

ments of ancient Egypt, the history of Black Africans and that of humanity in general, will “remain suspended in air.” According to him such a history can never be written correctly, “until African historians dare to connect it with the history of Egypt” (Diop, 1974: xiv-vi). In his view, even the study of languages, institutions, etc., cannot be treated properly until this is done: “in a word, it will be impossible to build an African humanities, a body of African human sciences, so long as the relationship does not appear legitimate” (ibid: xiv).

If the Pan-African University is, therefore, to respond to this historic challenge and be part of the correction of this historical distortion and theft of African heritages, it has to provide deeply thought out and well-conceived vision and mission, with a well articulated strategy to achieve its objectives. To succeed, it must be part of the creation of a counter-hegemonic discourse which can enable the “triple agenda of deconstruction, reconstruction and regeneration” to be undertaken at the same time (Odora, etc., 2002:236). To achieve this counter-discourse, the Pan-African University has to try to develop the university as a new institution of higher education, which can help and contribute to reshaping the direction of education on the continent towards a more culture-specific and culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy of liberation.

The Pan-African University must draw from these heritages and provide the students, adult learners and the communities with a space in which they can learn as well as carry out their research for analysis into dissertations and theses after having interacted and been trained by their teachers, community experts, and consultants at the University campuses as well as in the community knowledge sites. The University should also provide them with the facilities necessary for expanding on their existing knowledge and, with their teachers and indigenous knowledge experts, carry out theoretical formulations and reflections in an interdisciplinary, pluridisciplinary and comparative manner. It is to provide conditions for the acquisition of knowledge not only for “its own sake” but for the *sake of humanity and African recovery and rebirth*.

Epistemology and Methodology

For the Pan-African University to have a real impact and meaningful and innovative contribution the University should develop new methodologies and techniques for accessing, utilising, and storing all knowledge based on an African epistemology and cosmology. This would imply the development of an all-inclusive approach, which recognises all sources of human knowledge as valid within their own contexts. This requires the adoption of hermeneutic philosophy in its African essence (Nabudere, 2002).

An African-based epistemological foundation is a prerequisite to the production and development of knowledge. Foucault in his book: *The Order of Things: The Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1970), coins the concept "episteme" from its Greek origin to mean the *fore-conception of any investigation in the search for knowledge*. An episteme is therefore formed before hand through an "inner structure of being," which constitutes its order. It is this order that arranges the world of being through which the "symbolic disclosure" is produced. According to Foucault:

Order is, at one and the same time, that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by glance, an examination, a language (Foucault, 1970: xx).

This means that every speaker or investigator acts in accord with the symbolic order of which he/she may at times be unconscious in the activities within the given culture and "discourse framework". According to Foucault again: "The fundamental structures of a culture – those governing its language, its schemes of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices—establish for every man from the very start, the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home" (ibid). It is these prior historical forms, which constitute the ordered space that makes possible the articulation of particular statements while excluding others.

They also constitute the conceptual framework, which makes it possible to establish functional rules of discourse as well as methodologies and techniques "with respect to the formulation of statements that are possible in the corresponding discourse". The symbolic order that forms this framework are, therefore, not merely formal, universal, or transcendental presuppositions of discourse or language. "Rather they consist in historically, culturally, and discursively specified modes of disclosure in which substantive, deeply embedded assumptions about being, nature, subjectivity, time, and so on, are introduced as material presuppositions for serious discourse about the corresponding domains" (Kögler, 1999: 96).

Methodology enables these conceptual frameworks to be articulated by formulating rules and procedures to be followed in producing knowledge within the particular epistemology. These rules and procedures govern the construction of the concepts and their use in analysis. Therefore, a research methodology is not only important in defining how the research investigation is to be carried out, it also determines the instruments to be used and *how the findings are to be interpreted*. Furthermore, methodology determines the questions to be posed as well as the issues to be investigated. It follows that the "facts" to be found from the research are to a great extent

determined by the methodology employed, which is also based on an epistemological foundation. The methods, techniques, and tools, which are utilised in gathering evidence and the 'facts' in the course of investigation, are all determined by the methodology. Methodologies, methods, techniques and tools are therefore not 'neutral' instruments to be used by any system of knowledge, although a lot can be learnt from them in a cross-cultural way.

In our view, the methodological approach used by researchers should be hermeneutical. It should be open-ended to permit cross-cultural communication and exchange of ideas and opinions to promote understanding between all knowledge systems in their diversities [Habermas, J, 1984]. This is an African philosophical approach based on acceptance of pluralism and cultural diversity. The name of Hans-Georg Gadamer is associated with this line of argument in hermeneutics in which he has stressed the need for the "fusion of historical horizons" as the best way of transmitting understanding between the different lived histories or experiences of different communities as the basis of their existence. Hermeneutics insists on both the cultural context as well as the historical contingencies of events as necessary in bringing about a true understanding of the different lived experiences. Furthermore, hermeneutics has its roots in the African/Egyptian mythical figure of Hermes, the messenger of knowledge from the Gods to mortals, and that is why "hermeneutics is without reason, named after Hermes, the interpreter of the divine message to mankind, (Gadamer, 1975:98-100).

This philosophic-pedagogic approach should be used based on the premises that encourage self-directed learning, which engages with the knowledge, interests, and real life situations that the learners can bring to their learning situations. This notion of site-specific knowledge tries to correct the Eurocentric tendency to universalise knowledge around Occidental centres and sites of knowledge which are privileged to the disadvantage of others, claiming to be the only sites of "rationality" and "scientific knowledge." The recognition of these other sites and centres creates a truly multipolar world of global knowledge drawn from all sources of human endeavour.

Practically this means that the Pan-African University will identify these sites as centres of learning for both the students and the communities and, in the process, create directories of experts in African knowledge systems wherever Africans are to be found. The student will be allocated to these knowledge sites where an expert in the specific area of his/her knowledge will be allocated to him/her. In addition, local research assistants approved by the expert will be allocated to him/her to guide him/her in accessing knowledge from the community and the environment generally. The students will be required to spend 20 per cent of their requisite period of learning at this site

studying and learning from these local sites of knowledge and their experts.

During this time, the students will also be required to spend 20 per cent of this time teaching the local people some of the knowledge they have acquired through the formal educational system in areas of interest to the local people. In this way, the students will not be engaged in just *pirating and privatising* knowledge but will also be *depositing and banking* some of his knowledge in the communities in a mutual exchange of learning. The students and the communities will in this way have mutually created "learning societies" at the site of knowledge, where new libraries of knowledge will be created in an organic way. The notes of the indigenous knowledge made by the student in the local dialects and languages will be copied and deposited into a community library, which will emerge and expand as the University expands its work into the communities.

The gap that has been created between the African elites and their people arises out of the fact that the elites were taught through foreign culture, which included foreign languages. The result has been that the African elite has acquired extensive knowledge, which is not relevant to their communities. In the same way, because the elites did not learn through their mother tongues, they have not accessed the vast amount knowledge that is still available there. The consequence is that we have scholars and intelligentsia that do not understand and respect the strength of their cultures and knowledge base, while imbibing that of the other cultures. At the same time, we have rural communities that are illiterate but are depositories of indigenous and practical knowledge that could educate and enrich the education of the elites.

The elite looks at their village compatriots as ignorant and illiterate, while the villagers look upon the elites as agents of foreign culture and economic interests. Hostility exists between the two and there is no trust between them since relationships between them is based on top-down "development" dictates passed on by the elite to the "ignorant masses". This is the reason why African cultures and civilisation have stagnated, only changing to accommodate foreign inspired solutions. As Herbert Vilakazi has argued:

The peculiar situation here is that knowledge of the principles and patterns of African civilisation remained with ordinary, uncertificated men and women, especially of those in rural areas. The tragedy of African civilisation is that Western-educated Africans became lost and irrelevant as intellectuals who could develop African civilisation further. Historically, intellectuals of any civilisation are the voices of that civilisation to the rest of the world; they are the instruments of the development of the higher culture of that civilisation. The tragedy of Africa, after conquest by the West, is that her intellectuals, by and large, absconded and abdicated their role as developers, minstrels and trumpeters of African civilisation. African civilisation then stagnated; what remained alive in the minds of languages of the overwhelming majority of

Africans remained undeveloped. Uncertificated Africans are denied respect and opportunities for development; they could not sing out, articulate and develop the unique patterns of African civilisation (Vilakazi, 2002: 203).

Vilakazi adds that Africa therefore finds herself in an awkward situation. Africa needs to develop an educational system founded upon and building on the civilisation of the overwhelming majority, yet her intellectuals are strangers to that civilisation. They have no spiritual or intellectual, sympathetic relationship with the culture and civilisation embracing the masses of African people. "The biggest spiritual and mental challenge to African intellectuals is that in this massive re-education process, (which is necessary) the only teachers they have are ordinary African men and women who are uncertificated, and who live largely in rural areas." He concludes:

We are talking here about a massive cultural revolution consisting, first, of our intellectuals going back to ordinary African men and women to receive education of African culture and civilisation. Second, it shall break new ground in that un-certificated men and women shall be incorporated as full participants in the construction of the high culture of Africa. This shall be the first instance in history where certificated intellectuals alone shall not be the sole builders and determinants of high culture, but shall be working side by side with ordinary men and women in rural and urban life. Intellectuals must become anthropologists doing fieldwork, like Frobenius. But unlike academic Western anthropologists, African intellectuals shall be doing field work among their own people as part of a truly great effort aimed at reconstructing Africa and preparing all of humanity for conquering the world for humanism (ibid:204).

Vilakazi is quoted here at length to demonstrate that the exercise we are trying to set in motion here has occupied the sharpest minds on the African continent. He is also quoted at length because of the relevance of his ideas to what we are trying to do-and more so on the issue of linking the rural communities to centres of high learning. Vilakazi challenges all of us to wake up to this challenge and create a new University that will resurrect the deep values of African humanism (*Ubuntu*) that is so badly needed in today's gadgetised and digitised world without the human touch and spirit. The Pan-African University is intended to bridge that gap.

This approach would be one which departs from the one-sided western "Africanist" who, in his/her search for the "authentic" African and the depository of genuine Africa discourse, seeks to locate the "real" African, seeks to establish an iron wall between "the man in the bush" vis-à-vis the westernised educated African. While the problem Vilakazi poses is a real one, there exists nevertheless a link between the two components of African society. A non-African cannot play the role the African elite is required to play in the transformation of his/her society, nor can the creation of a new African University be established without both of them. Therefore, the new

approach seeks to build on the *unity of the two* social forces as necessary for the reconstruction of Africa from ruins inflicted by Europe.

Just like Vilakazi, who would like to see the African intelligentsia being tutored by their “uncertificated” men and women to jointly produce a new African high culture that would be at the base of the African Renaissance, Y. V. Mudimbe too would like to see the emergence of a “wider authority” of a “critical library” of the westernised African intellectual’s discourses developed together with “the experience of rejected forms of wisdom, which are not part of the structures of political power and scientific knowledge” (Mudimbe, 1988: x-xi). This is a useful reminder despite the fact that Mudimbe himself “lamentably fails to emancipate himself from the vicious circle inherent in the deconstructionist stance” of how this “usable past” should be used by African “experts” to construct an “authentic” African *episteme*. (Masolo, 1994: 179). The object of the Pan-African University is indeed to overcome this epistemological divide between the “uncertificated Africans” and the African intelligentsia.

African languages shall therefore be at the centre of developing the University at all knowledge sites. Language, as Cabral rightly pointed out, is at the centre of articulating a people’s culture. He points out that the African revolution would have been impossible without African people resorting to their cultures to resist domination. Culture is therefore a revolutionary force in society. It is because language has remained an “unresolved issue” in Africa’s development that present-day education has remained an alien system. Mucere Mugo quotes Franz Fanon who wrote: “to speak a language is to assume its world and carry the weight of its civilisation” (Mugo, 1999: 218). Prof. Kwesi K. Prah has argued consistently over many years that the absence of African languages has been the “key missing link” in African development [Prah, 1998].

It follows that the Pan-African University has to build its curriculum on the basis of promoting African languages at the sites of knowledge and at the same time try to build libraries at those sites in the language of the people living there. They shall be promoted as languages of science and technology. This implies a complete revamping of the epistemological, cosmological worldview of the present day discourse. It will also mean the application of different methodological and pedagogical approaches to learning and research in African conditions.

For instance, ICT should enable to serve the multicultural and multilingual base of African countries, which demand user interfaces to work within given cultural contexts, graphic literacy, language interfaces, etc:

The diversity of language and high illiteracy rate demands applied research on the appropriate systems platform for local community environments, such as generic voice applications (automated voice responses and recordings, library

systems, synthesised voice output for web documents, and so on.... Opportunities offered by the growth of ICTs that make it easier to design tools for illiterates and others with impairments of the visual, language or motor faculties required for reading (Bounemra, K; Soltane, B & Adam, L, 1999:341).

According to the three authors quoted above, research on tools for community participation in higher education requires the representation of local alphabets in a digital environment by mapping them and creating new applications and for purposes of communication; information search and retrieval using local languages which therefore requires the representation of local languages and hence the need for tools that can be used to search and retrieve information using local languages.

This requires considerable work in setting standards, developing sophisticated search algorithms, designing tools and creating search engines for specific languages. This would mean the development of African languages through its application to technology by developing translation tools to create speech production dictionaries, simple single-word language and sentence translation facilities in order to assist the illiterate speakers (ibid: 341-2). Thus development in general human welfare would result in the development of African languages applied to technological research, management and change.

The methodological approach should also be one that uses open and resource-based learning techniques available in the actual learning situations. It has therefore to draw on the indigenous knowledge materials available in the locality and make the maximum use of them. For instance, in the area of agriculture, the local practices of inter-cropping and use of shifting cultivation that take account of the ecological conditions have to be drawn upon for purposes of learning since this brings new knowledge that is relevant if the local communities consider them necessary. The aim is not to counter-pose "scientific" techniques and tools to the local science and knowledge materials. This enables a more legitimate framework for understanding the relation between the two approaches by the learners (Crossman & Devitch, 2002: 113, 116-7)

It also means that instead of lamenting the absence of "laboratories" and other technical equipment for science education, teachers and students, while awaiting such amenities, are able to use the environment as a "living laboratory". As Tema has correctly observed:

A positive spin-off of this practice may be that it will teach students some of the practices that are in danger of extinction with advancing urbanisation. Most urban children do not have an idea of how all the items mentioned above are constructed. Thus, conservations of traditional African culture could be achieved during science and mathematics lessons (Tema, 2002:137).

Here Tema was referring to how much mathematics is contained in the construction of a hut, and how much physics is contained in the construction of a drum. He adds, quoting Mbeki in the appeal for an African renaissance, that the challenge of an African science educator is, in the words of Mbeki, to “encourage her (who carries the burden of colonial domination to rebel) to assert the principality of humanity”. This can be done, Tema adds, by having “the courage to bring the contextual knowledge of the African learner into the classroom and make it a subject of study, and a scaffold to assist learning” (ibid: 136).

The issue of practical methodology has therefore to be faced squarely if we are to make a meaningful change in African education. The Pan-African University should be the starting point. One of the fundamental problems facing African economies and African scholarship is the dependency syndrome. This condition has replaced colonialism in the form of neo-colonialism. According to philosopher, Paulin Hountondji, research in Africa has been extroverted (externally oriented) just like African economies because knowledge production is a specific form of production “akin to the production of goods” [Hountondji, 2002: 26, 28]. He demonstrates how this was done in colonial France by showing how research centres were established in the metropole based on colonial agricultural production. It is these centres, which interpreted the raw research done in the colonies. This heritage has continued up to the present so that research by African universities remains at the level of collection of data while interpretations of it is done at the external centres of knowledge and power.

Tema questions whether this is the correct method of conducting research. He quotes Jensen who argues that the problem with African research is not the problem of lack of research skills, but one of epistemology. Jensen argues that it is the later, which decides the *research issues*. He argues that in his view, therefore, “instead of using methodology as a starting-point for introducing students to research, universities should develop students’ skills to identify the questions worth studying. It is hoped, that with this approach, students would unearth their own issues and questions, and thereby become internally motivated to conduct their own research” (ibid: 135).

On this issue we would like to add that the students and learners must decide the issues and the questions to be investigated not in isolation, but together with those involved in the issues to be investigated on. This then raises a deeper matter than that of method and goes back to the issue of epistemological foundations for knowledge production, which must be African-centred. This is why Tema’s other point about the student introducing his/her “prior knowledge” into the classroom as the beginning of learning attains significance. In this context, the student’s prior knowledge

would mean allowing students to use their “traditional world-view against the scientific paradigm.” He quotes Baimba as saying:

Traditional beliefs which make sense of the world to traditional students, often conflict with what is taught in science lessons. Hence, for the majority of students, meaningless information given them in science lessons is often shelved to be used only for the purpose of passing school examinations. Once outside school, it is traditional knowledge which they use to make sense of the world (Quoted in Tema, 2002:131).

This means that the student is denied from learning science from his/her actual lived experiences. The student is assumed to be an empty slate- *tabula rasa*-on whose brain knowledge can be implanted without experiential and contextual background. Learning already assumes a minimum level of prior knowledge and that minimum is passed on to the student in her/his mother in the context of the culture of that person. This must form the base of education otherwise the whole exercise of education turns out to be alien culture imposition.

But more fundamentally, the idea of a new University in Africa must aim at recovering those high spiritual virtues of humanity that have been sidelined in the modern chase of materiality, as we pointed out earlier. Chancellor Williams has called this the “New Humanities” in University and college education.

Curriculum Development

The above implies the need to develop a new curriculum that takes these epistemological, cosmological, methodological and pedagogical challenges into account. Hence the curriculum should be culture-specific and knowledge-source-specific in its orientation. As such, curriculum development should aim at:

- Increasing African knowledge in the general body of global human knowledge;
- Creating linkages between the sources of African knowledge and the centres of learning on the continent;
- Establishing centres of learning in the rural communities and ensure that these communities become “learning societies”;
- Linking knowledge to the production needs of African communities;
- Ensuring that science and technology are generated in relevant ways to address problems of the rural communities where the majority of African people live and that this is done in African languages;
- Reducing the gap between the African elites and the communities from which they come by ensuring that education is available to all Africans and that such knowledge is drawn from the communities.

As already pointed out, to engage in interdisciplinary and pluridisciplinary approaches will require that we take aboard African knowledge systems. This will need a redefinition of these disciplines into more conjoined intellectual arenas. Life situations cannot be studied in isolation of related life problems. In the European experience, social and human science disciplines appeared because of real problems, which needed to be studied and understood. Today, Africa's problems, challenges and concerns require comprehensive and all-sided approaches that can deal with issues in a holistic manner. The curriculum development must take up these methodological challenges.

This does not mean abandoning the existing social and human science disciplines. All it means is that these disciplines must now be subjected to interrogation and problematisation in ways that can enable us to synthesize some of them into new related subject matters. This requires curriculum development and since it also requires other deep considerations of epistemology and methodology, time will be required to develop them and subject them to seminars and consultations across the board with other stakeholders in African, the Diaspora, and others globally.

But there has to be a break that sets in motion the new paradigm. We must reject the basis of the present Western University, which began with the noble idea of being a place of learning for masters and their students. Originally this was associated with the idea of rendering mutual aid. Later we see the University becoming a place where western knowledge became privileged as the "Universal" norm while degrading other knowledge and belief systems of other societies. Still later the University became a place where religious studies were abandoned and students were relegated to "secular" education, which increasingly came to be linked to secular utilitarian concepts of possessive economic individualism. In this way, each man became his own priest. He (not she) became an egoistic knower able to produce knowledge for the market and for himself. Classic education became the preserve of the gentleman of leisure who could enjoy its fruits for its "own sake". Such education placed premium on mental and intellectual development linked to the search for materialist "good life" and ignored character of individuals "as it unfolds in interaction with his fellows" (Williams, 1993: 202-3).

As Chancellor Williams correctly points out, the purpose of the University should concern itself with the development of the *whole person*, and, "therefore fully integrated with whatever spiritual and moral forces there are in the world". It should lead to the "actual improvement of human life on this planet" [ibid: 203]. Our task, William adds, "is to determine the general line of (the) march towards a higher civilisation than now exists in the world today, and to carefully, step by step, develop a concrete and realistic scheme by and through

which the advance is to be made" [ibid: 199]. The scheme, which Williams proposes, is to establish a University, which breaks with this tradition of greed, and establish an "enlarged humanity." He proposes the creation of a department of the New Humanities as the core department in the division of the University concerned with research and advanced studies. Says Williams:

It will have the task of enlisting the services of the world's best thinkers of the work of developing a science of humanity through studies expressly aimed at better human relations. It is to be at the heart of the entire educational system and, therefore, the nation" (Ibid: 219).

Chancellor Williams goes to some length to explain the philosophy behind the ideas of a science of humanities. He believes the central idea in this philosophy is life. He argues that since neither western science nor religion have given satisfactory answers to three questions: Where do we come from? Why? And where are we bound?," it becomes a duty of the African University to provide space for discussing these questions, which are eternal. Such a free exploration and discourse that gives every human being a right to an education and exploration is the very expression of human freedom and will help to debunk one-sided theories such as those advanced by Darwin's *Origin of the Species* and their advocacy of "survival of the fittest" theories that have given licence to particular power groups to exterminate the weak ones. Instead, the enlarged humanities and the science of humanity should explore cooperative ways of survival of the entire humanity in the spirit of *Ubuntu* or humanness, which holds *I am because We Are*.

The approach put forward here by Chancellor Williams suggests a reorganisation of the disciplines of the social and human sciences as well as the natural sciences into a holistic approach of learning. The reorganisation should lead to the breaking down of the over-compartmentalisation and over-fragmentation of faculties, departments, and branches of knowledge. It should explore the reunification of allied disciplines such as anthropology (also sub-divided into sub-disciplines such as social anthropology, cultural anthropology, political anthropology, ethnography, physical anthropology, etc.), history, sociology, economics, political science, cultural studies, area studies, etc., into unified fields of study.

These disciplines have been so fragmented that there is no basic understanding between them. Through them, knowledge has been narrowed so much that, in isolation, it no longer makes sense. This sub-division also encourages snobbery and elevated pride, which are based on hollow self-esteem. The "knowledge" they wield is in many cases irrelevant to the needs of society as a whole. This also creates a false "independence" and "neutrality" of the knowledge-bearers as well as a much elevated "academic freedom", which is elevated above society in general. The Pan-African

University must be people-centred and community-based in which the freedom to learn and speak belongs to everyone.

It should be remembered, as Michel Foucault has correctly noted, that today's social and human sciences were themselves the product of historical necessity in the European society. These sciences did not inherit a certain (preordained) domain "which it was then their task to elaborate with positive methods and with concepts that had at last become scientific". They did not appear because "of some pressing rationalism, some unresolved *scientific* problem, some practical concern". According to him, at that juncture when it became necessary to analyse "man" in society, "it was decided to include man among the objects of science". The human sciences appeared "when man constituted himself as both that which must be conceived of and that which is to be known." He adds:

There can be no doubt, certainly, that the historical emergence of each of the human sciences was occasioned by a problem, a requirement, an obstacle of a theoretical or practical order: the new norms imposed by industrial society upon individuals were certainly necessary before psychology, slowly, in the course of the nineteenth century, could constitute itself as a science; and the threats that, since the French Revolution, have weighed so heavily on the balance, and even on the equilibrium established by the bourgeoisie, were no doubt also necessary before a reflection of sociology type could appear (Foucault, 1970:344-5).

Moreover, many of the social science disciplines and their methodologies, methods and techniques were created in defining moments of colonisation by Europe over non-European societies in the process of subjecting their knowledge systems to European dominance. A discipline such as anthropology and its sub-disciplines is a good example in this respect. Most of the "traditional" disciplines are also grounded in cultural worldviews, which are either antagonistic to other beliefs systems or have no methodology for dealing with them. Some of them draw their methodologies and techniques of research from studying the "other" societies that were regarded as primitive. In this respect, it can be stated emphatically that the colonies were the testing laboratories of Western science (Smith, 1999: 65).

Thus a process of redefining the boundaries between the different disciplines in a Pan-African University is the same process of reclaiming, reordering, and, in some cases, reconnecting "those ways of knowing", which were submerged, subverted, hidden or driven underground by colonialism. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith has correctly noted of native Australian knowledge systems, which were colonised:

In terms of the way knowledge was used to discipline the colonised, it worked in a variety of ways. The most obvious forms of discipline were through exclusion, marginalisation and denial. Indigenous ways of knowing were excluded

and marginalised.... Discipline is also partitioned (like land-DWN), (where) individuals (were) separated and space compartmentalised. ... This form of discipline worked at the curriculum level, for example, as a mechanism for selecting our 'native' children and girls for domestic and manual work. It worked also at the assessment level, with normative tests designed around the language and cultural capital of white middle classes (Smith, 1999: 68).

Creating a holistically defined curriculum will, therefore, of necessity, mean reasserting African ways of knowing and ordering of knowledge. Such a process of reclaiming our own ways of knowing is in fact a liberatory process, which must be reflected in the academic curriculum by participatory research in which the masses of the African people must participate.

Thus it is incumbent on African scholars who live in this age with the specific problems and concerns of the moment to work together with the "uncertificated" African men and women to determine the nature of our social science disciplines and to pursue them in ways that can address societal problems. Since our problems are multidimensional and multifaceted, it is necessary that they be investigated from in multidimensional and holistic manner. It is this that calls for interdisciplinarity and pluridisciplinarity in our methodologies. The interdisciplinary approach also draws from the African-centred approach, which was holistic and complementary as opposed to the dualistic Newtonian deductive approach that established a body-mind dichotomy.

The interdisciplinary and pluridisciplinary approach and methodology will facilitate access to the theoretical resources of the various disciplines and also entail the combining of the natural sciences with the social sciences and the 'humanities' so as to have a holistic understanding of nature and the way it relates to human kind and society in general. The study of African society will also not just be theoretical- it will have to delve into political and ideological questions, which science has to underlie.

The study and research will reflect the daily dealings of society and the challenges of daily life of the people. Therefore, as Sémon Pathé Guéye has pointed out, the problematic of the African Renaissance must be tackled through a fruitful dialectic between theory and practice, intellectual elaboration and practical experience. He adds:

This dialectic will be based on, and underlined by, a permanent and constructive dialogue between the scientists and politicians who are committed to the same objective of renewing our continent, but also between the masses and the elite, who pretend to think and act in their name but sometimes confine themselves to intellectual speculation that has nothing to do with the daily life of the common people. The concept which will result from our discussions would be able to meet the needs and demands of the masses and to become, in their hands, a powerful instrument for positively transforming their current situation and opening the prospect of a better future (Guéye, 1999:244).

The basic idea is to redefine the role of the University in the world today and define its specific responsibilities for enhancing human civilisation in general. This requires the widening application of the hermeneutic philosophy that recognises the basic unity of human endeavour through "discourse" which, according to Heidegger, expresses "the intelligibility of Being-in-the world" (Heidegger, 1962: 204).

ASC Trust, in carrying out this task, has entered into a collaborative arrangement with other institutions of higher learning to promote and advance the process of curriculum development in the contest of these realities. We have created a collaborative arrangement with the University of South Africa-UNISA-in a joint venture to develop such an African-centred curriculum based on a hermeneutic approach. More efforts will be made to enter into similar arrangements to broaden this process, which has to be on going. Furthermore, the effort will involve post-graduate students who have to embark on research at the sites of knowledge so that the new curriculum reflects the actual knowledge on the ground.

Taban lo Liyong, Head of the Centre for African Studies at the University of Venda, South Africa, who has been involved in elaborating an African-centred curriculum for the teaching at the Centre, has argued that each discipline must elaborate and extend its curriculum to embrace the African indigenous worldview, or social practices, or scientific and technological usages and developments.

According to Liyong, past technological developments and achievements of Africa, their techniques, arts and artistries, the products and processes of production and their techniques must be studied with a view to "modernising them." At the same time, he argues that technological innovations from Europe and Asia "should be married to the native ones to produce a third new and appropriate technology." In whatever event, he advocates that the "African rhythm should control the speed of adoption or adaptation; African ethos of communal care and spiritual life should determine what we get from outside or keep from our past" (Liyong, 1999).

We think this is the correct approach because besides recognising other systems of knowledge, it leaves open the need for African systems of knowledge to acknowledge and learn from others in a discourse of cross-cultural understanding. But we do not agree that in developing a new curriculum, each discipline should elaborate an African-centred curriculum to embrace African indigenous world-view and practices in that particular discipline. This would be "adding" to the confusion of fragmentation, which would render the African world-view that should be holistic to the heap of the existing fragmented knowledge.

We acknowledge that the territory from which we are operating is a hostile one and what Taban lo Liyong proposes is an engagement in a kind of

"guerrilla warfare" on hostile territory. But we must go beyond that and capture the truth in Chancellor Williams' paradigm, which builds on a holistic challenge to the western fragmentation. Indeed this is how I would be understanding Liyong's appeal that African rhythm should control the process. In my view, it should not only control the speed, but should more fundamentally, aim at the content and the quality of the development of the curriculum.

We agree with these observations broadly as a basis for debate and work in progress. The field of curriculum development needs to go beyond the present day approaches and move towards *integrated and synthesized knowledge*. Privileging African-centred curriculum must go beyond a narrow conception of what is purely African to include such knowledge within the wider synthesised framework of global knowledge. There are several levels at which this can take place. There is the level of integrating the traditional African depositories of knowledge with modern science teaching and the application of technology into a holistic knowledge. This would imply the integration of both the cognitive and conceptual frameworks in both systems of thought and understanding. The question, however, is can the duality between rationality and non-rationality be synthesised? If this is done, it will mean a new form of knowledge that has meaning and significance of human life and human community as a global entity with its diversities.

We agree with Fatnowna and Pickett when they say that to achieve the above synthesis, would in one sense, be a "return" but also a "a re-integrative process of recovering wholeness". In this sense, according to them, such integration "goes beyond itself because the same process engages us in *transformation*". It is a dialectical transformation of the different parts that existed before, but which now exist in *new* form and with a new content. It is a transformation, which involves the liberating of knowledge at both ends of the sites of knowledge as well as "being intimately bound up with the transformation of values and a sense of belonging to a whole-earth, a perspective that privileges the local within commitment to the global". This essentially is a transformation of human consciousness "both driven by and necessary for those changes in knowledge systems" creating a "relational nature of things" (Fatnowna and Pickett, 2002: 222-3).

The process of establishing the Pan-African University and the development of the new curriculum will very much be assisted by the fact that the University will at first offer postgraduate courses. It means that the students who engage in this transformative education will be part of the designing of the new curriculum in the process of their assignments in the different fields of study. Responding to the call for a completely new approach, these

students will visit actual sites of knowledge where they will learn and relate to them in a cultural-sensitive way. In so doing, they will already imbue a new form and sense of content in the new curriculum. Together with their teachers at the campuses and knowledge sites, they will build, define and articulate a new approach to producing knowledge, which will reconnect with the African world. The fact that the African social discourse is still coherent and un-segmented will provide a cementing element to the crafting of a new curriculum. Thus new disciplines and subjects will be defined by the actual theoretical development, practice and the application of new theory being developed by the students and the communities. But to begin the process, a minimum design of a curriculum will be necessary and this can be undertaken in collaboration with other institutions already devoting attention to this important matter.

African-Based Pedagogy

The above epistemological foundations and methodology based on the need to develop a new curriculum already implies a different pedagogy to teaching and learning. If we are to draw our inspiration and materials for our learning from real life situations of the African people, especially in the rural areas, we have to adopt those pedagogical methods and techniques that inform their philosophy of life, their worldview and their lived experiences and practice. The key to developing an African-centric pedagogy will arise from the fact that the University will be based in the knowledge-specific sites where African experts of different branches of knowledge are to be found. These sites will help to define the content as well as the pedagogy. Initially, the students will, on the basis of existing knowledge, undergo methodological workshops where the African-based pedagogical tools of teaching and passing on knowledge are used in those cultural environments.

African systems of communication, learning, entertaining and socialising are based on the spoken word or orature. One of the processes of privileging western knowledge has been the undermining of the oral tradition and orature in general. Walter Ong has pointed out in his extensive work on orality and literacy that the widespread use of literacy in the west has brought about a cultural mutation in the encoding, storing and transmission of knowledge, which has had profound consequences for the recognition and mobilisation of endogenous knowledge. Many scholars have pointed out that cultures based on oracy for encoding, storage, and transmission of knowledge share their knowledge in very practical community-based, interactive multisensual transactions. Crossman and Devisch, for instance, state that:

Oracy is very dependent on the participants' culture-specific habitus, bodily dispositions, culture of speech/rhetoric, and (gender-, status-, role- and age-specific) styles of communication. Oracy anchors memory in the (rhythmic,

performative and ritualising) body and in particular in the heart as the source of sentiments and morality, and the seat of both secrecy and opacity with regard to the memory and interpretation of life-events. Oracy favours 'figuration,' a recognition of polysemic reality informed often by unknowingly-by metaphor. *Literacy*, in contrast (at least alphabetic or lineal writing) entails a *technè* that anchors knowledge in vision (more traditionally called observation) and in the homogenising text. Writing also produces a 'distancing representation' of ideas in line with a more solitary and critical interaction with the text and its claims to authority. ... In summary, literacy has favoured an essentialistic dynamic of 'literalisation' in which knowledge is equated with mirroring 'ostension' or the 're-representation' of reality (Crossman & Devisch, 1999:114).

Crossman and Devisch add that the *techno-science* and the massive power of the conjoined media promote a form of methodologisation (with emphasis on procedure rather than substance), operationalisation, prospect and homogenising order as techniques of government and science management. This essentialising undermines other forms of knowledge, especially those in "speech communities" and "communities of conversation" based on oracy to the extent that it marginalizes and destroys useful and practical knowledge in those communities, which could be of importance to the other communities in the world. For instance, during the establishment of the Medieval University in Europe, the first university in southern Italy utilised the African practice of palaver and to teach law students rhetoric, speechifying and oratory. This is today's legal art called advocacy, which has encompassed other areas of human communication.

These pedagogical approaches, which are implied in oracy, contain forms of art and techniques to which they give expression, which are essential for adult learning. They create for the scholar cognitive shifts in the way new knowledge is accessed and acquired as well as opening up new culture-specific, cognitive horizons such as parody, drama and performative arts, which they could not access before. This also changes the process of knowledge exchange and negotiation, of roles of power as well as influence, which have been denied these forms of expression as well as their power. By mainstreaming these forms of expression, the agents of these forms of expression gain visibility and recognition in knowledge creation and production. In this way indigenous tales, stories, proverbs, legends, myths, symbols and epics come back to life. These cultural forms of knowledge incorporate people's philosophies of life, norms, values in a kind of "moving" and "living library."

Mucere Mugo of Kenya has perfected the combination of literal and oral techniques of learning and transmitting knowledge and messages in her acidic work. She has used orature interludes as a methodological approach in critical analysis as a way of developing an emancipatory and libratory

education and culture. The interludes “punctuate” the literal discourse and the discussion. She does this because she argues that literacy should not be privileged over orate traditions, consumed by the majority of African people (Mugo, 1999: 211, 225). We agree with this approach.

Life Long Learning

Life-long learning has recently become a clarion call of many countries of the developed world as well as international organisations as a new approach to learning in the 21st century. Yet this educational approach is deeply embedded within the African culture and epistemology. According to Mugo, learning and culturalisation in African societies were considered continuing processes “that took place from birth until death with the family unit, extended family, the village and the entire community participating”. She adds:

This extended, collective participation in educating children and inculcating cultural ethos, however, did not replace the efforts of the professionals who taught very specialised knowledge and skills, especially at a given milestones of the journey of life. The education was also very practical in conception and methodology. It was oriented towards problem posing and problem solving at individual and communal levels (Ibid: 213).

Mugo refers to the work of Jomo Kenyatta in his anthropological work about the Gikuyu: *Facing Mount Kenya*, and Julius Nyerere’s *Arusha Declaration* and *Tanzania Ten Years After Independence*, as approving this method of learning and as justifying them on the basis of the long African cultural experience.

The new concept applied in new conditions by the international community is important for African education at this juncture because it enables us to open up new institutions and processes of learning to the masses of the people to whom Prof. Vilakazi referred to as “uncertificated” African men and women to attain higher learning. But the idea of life-long learning is not new, as pointed out above. In the case of the developed capitalist world, it emerged as part of the effort to deal with growing unemployment in the industrialised countries after the mid-1980s with the advent of globalisation. Before that it applied to adult learning, especially in the Scandinavian countries, where life-long learning was seen as continuing education. Later it became a means by which workers could be retrained for different kinds of ‘flexible’ employment.

However, the 1997 UNESCO Fifth International Conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg, Germany, advanced our understanding of the concept to a new level. The concept and strategy took on a wider meaning. In article 19(a) of the Agenda for the Future adopted by the Conference (CONFETIAV), the international community committed itself to:

Open schools, colleges and universities to adult learners:

- i. by requiring institutions of formal education from primary level onwards to be prepared to open their doors to adult learners, both women and men, adapting their programmes and learning conditions to meet their needs;
- ii. by developing coherent mechanisms to recognize the outcomes of learning undertaken in different contexts, and ensure that credit is transferable within and between institutions, sectors and states;
- iii. by establishing joint university/community research and training partnerships, and by bringing the services of universities to outside groups;
- iv. by carrying out interdisciplinary research in all respects of adult education and learning with the participation of adult learners themselves;
- v. by creating opportunities for adult learning in flexible, open and creative ways, taking into account the specificities of women's and men's lives.

These commitments fit in very well with the vision and objectives of the Pan-African University for they provide for the mechanisms and strategies, which can enable us to bring adult learners to formal institutions of learning and remove the divide between informal, non-formal and formal education in line with African traditions and cultures. It also provides for the cooperation in research between the university and the communities, as well as providing for the recognition of learning outcomes obtained through their own contexts outside the formal system of education.

Other bodies have taken up the CONFINTEAV Agenda as well. Under article 1(a) of the *World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century*, it was stated that the core values of higher education are to:

provide opportunities for higher learning and for learning throughout life, giving to learners an optimal range of choice and flexibility of entry and exit points within the system, as well as an opportunity for individual development and social mobility in order to educate for citizenship and for active participation in society, with worldwide vision, for endogenous capacity building, and for the consolidation of human rights, sustainable development, democracy and peace, in a context of justice.

The first university to take up the Hamburg CONFINTEAV commitment seriously was the University of Mumbai (Bombay), which in article 9 of their *Mumbai Statement on Life Long Learning, Active Citizenship and the Reform of Higher Education* argued that in their understanding the transformation to genuine life long learning:

requires a holistic approach which (a) supports the institution becoming a life long learning community itself; (b) integrates academic, financial and administrative elements; (c) provides structures which are responsible for organisational, staff, student and curriculum development and community engagement; and (d) aligns the various supportive structures such as academic information systems, library provision and learning technologies to the new mission of universities in learning societies.

The statement continued to point out that the key purpose of life-long learning was active citizenship, which was important in terms of "connecting individuals and groups to the structures of social, political and economic activity in both local and global contexts. Democratic citizenship highlights the importance of women and men as agents of history in all spaces of their lives" (Article 3).

These Mumbai positions point to the importance of the Pan-African University beginning to build on the foundations of the link between the university and the community. It also emphasizes the fact that life long learning is dependent on both the individual and the social context and that learning occurs in institutions, but also anywhere and anytime throughout life. What is crucially important is to recognise it and work on that basis for higher education to become part and parcel of the daily life of individuals and communities. This is the only way in which education can become a practical right for all human beings.

This approach means that life-long learning enables students and adult learners to learn at different times, in different ways, for different purposes at various stages of their lives and careers. It is thus connected with providing learning opportunities throughout life. It also means that in institutions of higher learning, all members of the institution are learners and that at different times these members will take different roles as educators, students, administrators, cleaners and other support staff positions.

These positions were picked up, adopted and developed further by the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. In the *Cape Town Statement*, characteristic elements of a life-long learning higher education institution were laid out. These were to be used as an instrument to assist transformation within the institutions of higher learning. These elements have been taken into account in this concept paper and will continue to be used to develop and monitor various activities to ensure proper development of the system.

Thus applied to African conditions, the concept of life-long learning can meet the needs of rural communities who are denied access to higher education. This can be done by adopting the idea of *recognition of prior learning* which enables learners to be accredited for different kinds of learning they have acquired through different contexts of their lives. This recognition is based on the idea, according to the *Cape Town Statement*, that there are different "ways of knowing", if when valued, enable marginalised social groups to be full participants in the creation and dissemination of knowledge. It is also based on the recognition of resource-based learning environment accessible to learners wherever they are and not just on campus. The adoption of this approach requires the university to make provision for self-paced independent study by providing students and learners "to study effectively wherever, whenever and whatever pace is appropriate for them" (p. 11)

The concept of life-long learning also widens the scope for students and learners in course presentation and opportunities to enrol for and study courses which include the use of multi- and combined-media delivery and support, utilising the technologies, both old and new, and the flexible learning structures of open and distance learning, such as those suggested here of identifying and locating sites of knowledge which can also be centres of learning for rural communities. The multi- and combined media delivery and support would include the provision of print, correspondence, mass media (such as radio), occasional face-to-face tutorials and study groups as well as the provision of information communication technologies in rural areas as well. We have argued the feasibility of such an approach for pastoral communities through community-based telecentres of learning (Nabudere, 2002b).

The application of Information Communication Technologies (ICT), will also promote the linkage between science and technical research in the University and its link to production units, as well as encouraging technological research in rural communities, which are underserved by modern technology. It will also encourage applied research relevant to local technologies with which people have some familiarity. Improved connectivity will also enable the removal of hindrances to good higher education such as limited staff resources, poorly prepared students, outdated curricula, declining academic quality and lack of library resources. By providing higher education access to remote rural areas through distance education, the Pan-African University will be able to reach out to a wider student body in line with the principles of life long-learning.

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Endnotes

1. This came out of a consultation between Prof. Prah and members of the Task Force of the Afrika Study Centre, at the Sheraton Hotel, Kampala, on 10th December, 2002.